



# proto-type

Proto-type Theater Inc.

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## ABOUT SILENCE

*In About Silence paranoia, beauty and the pain of intimate human relationships is explored with three people, three laptops, three televisions and music from another world.*

Written by Peter S. Petralia with music by [zygote].

In a time where television is the backdrop to our daily lives, where communication happens through mediation (mobile phone, fax, email) more frequently than it does through face to face discussion, where we are less likely to feel and more likely to think – in this time, *About Silence* meditates on life, love and obsession.

Three people are seated at a table facing three laptops (and the audience). They begin speaking, their voices amplified by microphones and their faces illuminated only by the glow of the laptop screen. In front of them, extreme close-ups of the performer's laptop screens, their hands on keyboard, their faces. On the performers' screens, is a long list of statements, images and questions, most of which follow the form "About..." *This is an unrehearsed performance: the performer will have never seen the text before.* During *About Silence*, the performers follow a few simple rules: none of the lines are assigned to a performer, all the lines must be spoken, the order of the lines cannot change, if one of them starts speaking at the same time as another they synch up their voices. What this means is that the performance ends up being about how the particular performers negotiate the text live in front of an audience. The charged atmosphere this creates is bracing: the performers laugh, smile or seem upset by what they are reading and, of course, there are inevitably moments of silence.

The text is stream of conscious and has a reoccurring theme about relationships: with yourself, with lovers, friends, the media, the concept of beauty in society, with technology and mediation. It goes from the very personal and specific to silly and absurd things. The text and the immediacy of the performance form, leaves the audience wondering about their connection to each other – and about the silences that hold darker, deeper, explosive meanings.

Every performance of *About Silence* is different and the performers are *sought out locally*. No actors/performers travel with the piece, making it incredibly portable. To date *About Silence* has been performed by 20 different performers, typically grouped thematically (i.e., a group of burlesque performers, a group of artistic directors, a group of arts workers in a rural town, the theatre company Mabou Mines, Scottish live art practitioners, etc). By having local performers for each showing, the piece is able to have a particular resonance which otherwise might be lost – and the universality of the silence it describes hits the audience in a much more direct way coming from people they recognize as part of their community.



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Linda Chapman, Associate Artistic Director of New York Theatre Workshop calls *About Silence*, “a remarkably sharp, intelligent and affecting evening of performance. Peter Petralia and Proto-type do terrific work whose time has definitely come.” Martin Denton of *nytheatre.com* has similar praise: “Petralia’s language and concerns are, respectively, beautiful and bracing. *About Silence* is a fascinating evening.”

*About Silence* uses three laptops, three television screens, three live-feed cameras, three microphones, an mp3 player and a table with three chairs. Peter Petralia travels with the piece to direct the local performers and speak as requested about the work, concept and form.

*Text excerpt upon request.*